

**SUMMARY OF THE
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
AUGUST 1, 2001**

The On-site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Wednesday, August 1, 2001 at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. Alfredo Sotomayor of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to address items of importance as identified in the committee's previously distributed meeting agenda.*

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Sotomayor called the meeting to order with a review of the agenda. No modifications to the agenda were deemed necessary. The committee then approved the minutes of their July 18 teleconference as written. Mr. Sotomayor announced that a workshop on measurement uncertainty would be offered December 3-4, 2001, in conjunction with the seventh NELAC interim meeting (NELAC 7i) in Arlington, Virginia. He encouraged all committee members to attend. There being no further announcements, the committee moved to the next item on the agenda.

STATUS OF ACTION ITEMS

Mr. Sotomayor updated participants on the status of action items from the committee's July 18 teleconference as follows:

- **Letter to NELAC Chair regarding proposed mechanism for recognizing departing committee members** - Complete - Mr. Sotomayor reported that he had written to Ms. Silkie Labie, NELAC Chair, to communicate the committee's recommendation that the NELAC Board of Directors (BoD) adopt a mechanism for recognizing departing members.
- **Expanded language on "Data Document and Review" in Appendix A** - Active - Language drafted by Ms. Marlene Moore was distributed for committee review. - included on August 1 agenda for further discussion
- **Update of Chapter 5 assessment checklist** - Active - Checklists based on the 1999 and 2000 NELAC Standards were distributed for committee review. - included on August 1 agenda for further discussion
- **Final comments on Chapter 3** - Complete - Mr. Sotomayor reported that he had proofread the May 25, 2001 version of Chapter 3 and submitted his comments to Research Triangle Institute (RTI).
- **Continued development of Appendix C** - Active - Mr. Sotomayor reported that he had provided Ms. Mimi Uhlfelder with a summary of the committee's July 18 discussion of Appendix C. Ms. Uhlfelder noted that she would follow up with Mr. Richard Sheibley

on confidential business information (CBI) issues. She also noted that she would incorporate the changes recommended by the committee and hoped to distribute an updated draft of Appendix C for committee review by September 1, 2001.

UPDATE OF CHAPTER 5 QUALITY SYSTEMS (QS) ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Mr. Charles Dyer led discussion of the two checklists that had been distributed electronically prior to the meeting. He explained that one checklist (Revision 4F) had been based on the 1999 NELAC Standard and the other checklist (Revision 5D) had been based on the 2000 NELAC Standard. Mr. Dyer noted that the members of the Accrediting Authority Workgroup have been using the 1999 checklist for over one year and suggested that it would be beneficial to get input from the Accrediting Authority Workgroup on the two checklists. He asked for the On-site Assessment Committee's approval to distribute the checklists to the Accrediting Authority Workgroup for their comments within the two weeks after their next scheduled teleconference. Noting that the individuals using the checklists to assess laboratories can provide the most substantive input, the committee readily approved Mr. Dyer's request.

Mr. Dyer briefly reviewed some of the major changes to the checklists. He noted that most of the changes involved relocating or adding language for clarity. For example, checklist question 5.4-1 has been expanded to include a list of documents that can be examined to verify that the laboratory is legally identifiable. Mr. Dyer noted that method-specific microbiology items have been removed from the 1999 checklist. There was moderate discussion of tests for free and total chlorine and of the sensitivity of chlorine residual test strips as compared to the DPD indicator method. Mr. Dyer indicated that chlorine analysis is currently a topic of great interest. Noting that her laboratory uses the chlorine residual test strips, Ms. Uhlfelder volunteered to gather additional information about the test strips.

Mr. Dyer noted that checklist questions taken out of context could lead to misinterpretation of the standard. He offered concentration of verification standards as an example of such an issue. Mr. Sotomayor noted that for this reason the committee should be careful to include in the checklist only those requirements that are included in the standard.

Mr. Dyer indicated that he would like to post the revised checklists on the NELAC Website as soon as they have been approved by the committee and urged committee members to submit their comments to him as soon as possible. He also indicated that he would not address the 2001 checklist until he obtains an electronic copy of the 2001 version of Chapter 5. He offered the end of December 2001 as a probable realistic deadline for completion of the 2001 checklist. Ms. Uhlfelder volunteered to assist Mr. Dyer as she has done in the past.

APPENDIX A

Ms. Moore led participants in a discussion of language she had drafted to expand and clarify the topic of data and document review as addressed in Appendix A, Section A.4.11.2.3 (On-site Assessment Proper). There was extensive discussion of the issue of uncertainty. Mr. Sotomayor noted that many participants at the Seventh NELAC Annual Meeting (NELAC 7) had not known what the committee meant by "uncertainty" and that proposed language pertaining to uncertainty had been deleted in response to their comments. There was substantial discussion of method uncertainty versus measurement uncertainty. There was also discussion of what is meant by

“method.” It was suggested that “method uncertainty” would be more accurately termed “laboratory measurement uncertainty.” It was noted that many terms, such as “bias,” “precision,” “accuracy,” and “measurement,” are defined differently by different agencies. It was also noted that a consistent inter-agency glossary is needed. Ms. Moore suggested that NELAC should be concerned with method uncertainty and that measurement uncertainty is a regulatory and client issue that should be addressed outside of NELAC. Mr. Sotomayor noted that Mr. William Ingersoll had sent him some information on an alternative approach to uncertainty. In response Ms. Moore suggested that her approach and Mr. Ingersoll’s approach are, in fact, the same. Noting that the basis of the data quality objective (DQO) process has to do with measurement of uncertainty and what uncertainty is allowable to make environmental decisions, she suggested that Mr. Ingersoll is attempting the process from the client perspective and she is attempting it from the laboratory perspective.

The committee finally decided to remove language pertaining to uncertainty from Appendix A until the inclusion of International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 17025 language in Chapter 5. It was agreed, however, that the committee should educate itself about uncertainty in order to participate fully in Chapter 5 discussions. Mr. Sotomayor indicated that he would like to include the issue of uncertainty on the committee’s agenda for the next teleconference with Mr. Ingersoll and Ms. Moore taking the lead.

Participants reviewed Ms. Moore’s draft language. Section A.4.11.2.3 now reads as follows (new language indicated by double underline):

A.4.11.2.3 On-site Assessment Proper

1. Use of the Quality Systems Checklist
2. Detailed Tour and Observation of Operations
3. Staff Interviews
4. Calibration and Traceability of measurements
 - a. Traceability of Data from Sample Receipt to Reported Result
 - b. Traceability of Reported Result to Raw Data
5. Data and Document review
 - a. Conformance to Documented Procedures and Evaluating Any Departures and Deviations
 - b. Review of Quality Control Data
 - c. Review of Raw Data for Conformance to Data Reported to Client
 - d. Review of Data for Improper Processing of Samples and Results
6. Records Retention and Reporting

CONCLUSION

With little time remaining, Mr. Sotomayor thanked everyone in attendance for their input and reviewed his proposed agenda for the next teleconference. He indicated that the next teleconference would include discussion of uncertainty and discussion of Appendix D. Mr. Sotomayor also indicated that he would distribute bulleted items for committee review in preparation for discussion of Appendix D. Mr. Santos Urrea requested the most recent versions of Appendices A and B. Ms. Lisa Greene requested that Mr. Sotomayor provide RTI with

electronic copies of Appendices A and B because the appendices included with the 2001 standard contained conflicting codes that prevented RTI editors from working with the document. Mr. Sotomayor indicated that he would distribute the appendices. The meeting was adjourned as the committee's allotted teleconference time expired at 2:30 p.m. EDT. The committee's next meeting will be on August 15, 2001 via teleconference.

**ACTION ITEMS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
AUGUST 1, 2001**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Committee members will submit comments on the 1999 and 2000 QS assessment checklists to Mr. Dyer.	9/3/01
2.	Mr. Dyer will submit the 1999 and 2000 QS assessment checklists to the Accrediting Authority Workgroup for their review.	8/15/01
3.	Committee will include issue of uncertainty on agenda for 8/15/01 teleconference - Mr. Ingersoll and Ms. Moore to lead discussion.	8/15/01
4.	Committee will include discussion of Appendix D on agenda for 8/15/01 teleconference - Mr. Sotomayor to distribute bulleted items for committee review prior to teleconference.	8/15/01
5.	Committee will meet via teleconference.	8/15/01

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ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
AUGUST 1, 2001

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